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FRESH LIGHT ON TWO OLD UTTARAMALLUR INSCRIPTIONS

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Election Regulations of Village Committee Members more than thousand years ago

Here is given the translation of the earlier of the two widely known Uttaramallūr inscriptions recording a regulation dealing with what is termed the Pot-ticket system of selecting members for certain specified village committees, that had been functioning at the place more than thousand years ago.

Translation of the earlier inscription

(*ll* 1–3) Hail! Prosperity! In the twelfth year of (the reign of) king Parākēsarivarman who captured Madurai, We, the members of the Assembly of Uttaramēru-Chaturvedimaṅgalam—for forming committees of our village[1], from this year onwards, once every year, the Annual Committee, the Garden Committee and the Tank Committee—made, in accordance with

1. The word *eṅgaḷūr* in the the text can only go with *'vāriyamāga'*. It cannot mean 'to us' or 'to our village.' If the Royal Letter was sent for the Assembly or the village it would have come through the Divisional Assembly. Here it is worth noting that in the Velvikudi plates, the claimant was asked to prove his claim by the Nāḍu (*i.e.* the Divisional Assembly)

the Royal Letter[2], the following Regulation[3], Tattanur Mūvēndavēḷān remaining with us :

(Regulation commences here)

(*ll* 3–6) There being thirty family-organisations, the members belonging to each of the thirty family-organisations shall assemble together and write down, for pot-tickets, names of persons from among those who own more than quarter (*vēli*) of tax-paying land, who have houses built on their own house-sites, who are within sixty years of age and above thirty years, who are considered experts in Vēdas, Śāstras and in executing business, who have righteously earned their wealth and are of pure body, who have not been discharging the duties of committee members within the three years just passed and are not the near relatives of such committee members as have retired after doing committee functions.

(*ll* 6–9) (Pot–tickets) shall be collected by going from one *Chēri* to another.

Tickets shall be drawn by a boy who cannot distinguish forms, so that there shall be one person for each of (the twelve) *Chēris*. The twelve persons (thus chosen) shall constitute the Annual Committee.

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2. The words *śrīmugappadi āiñaiyināl* would ordinarily mean 'by the order contained in the letter'. But in the explanatory concluding portion *śrīmugam* is separated from *ājñaiyināl*. Therefore it would be better to take '*śrīmugappadi*' with '*seydōm*' (made or promulgated) and '*ājñaiyināl* with '*irundu*'. This done, the two words would mean "the Assembly promulgated the *vyavastha* in accordance with the Royal Letter with Tattanūr Mūvēndavēḷān being present in the assembly by order (of the king)."

3. *Uttiramēruch–chaturvēdimaṅgalattu śabhaiyōm ivvāṇḍu mudal eṅgaḷūr śrīmugappadi āñaiyinal Tattanūr Muvēndavēḷān irundu vāriyam=āga āṭṭ=orukkālum samvatsara–vāriyamun–thöṭṭa–vāri-yamum ēri–vāryiamum iḍuvadarku vyavasthai śeyda pariśāvadu.*

Before this, twelve pot–tickets shall be drawn as detailed above and the twelve (thus chosen) shall form the Garden Committee. The remaining six shall form the Tank Committee.

The three classes of committees that have been formed by drawing thirty pot-tickets shall, after doing the work of the committees for full three hundred and sixty days, retire. The fresh committees to be formed after (their retirement) shall also be similarly chosen by writing pot-tickets and drawing them in the manner detailed in the palm-leaf containing the Regulation.

The near relatives of those that have functioned in the Committees shall not have their names written for pot-tickets.

(*l* 10) For the *Pañchavara* Committee and the Gold Committee, pot–tickets shall be written in the thirty Family Organisations and one person for each *Chēri* shall be chosen. Of these twelve, six shall form the *Pañchavara* Committee and the other six, the Gold Committee.

(*l* 11) For committees other than the Annual Committee, those who have functioned once, shall not have their names written again for pot–tickets.

(Here ends the Regulation)

(*ll* 11–12) " In this very manner, from this year onwards, till the moon and sun (endure), committees shall always be constituted by the pot-ticket system only" stated the Royal Letter which king Dēvēndravarman Chakravarti Śrī Vīranārāyaṇan Śrī Parāntakadēvar *alias* Parākēsarivarman was pleased to issue: and it having been received and shown (to us), we, the members of the Assembly of Uttaramēru–Chaturvēdimaṅgalam,–Tattanūr Mūvendaveḷān sitting with us in accordance with the sacred order,—made the Regulation so that the wicked of our village may perish and the good may prosper.

(Here ends the inscription).

A few remarks may now be offered about this inscription. The first thing to note is that the inscription is the outcome of a Royal Letter (*Śrīmukha*) sent by king Parākēsarivarman Parāntaka with a specific order in it. The form in which the inscription is

presented is the work of the members of the Assembly of Uttaramēru-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam. This is evident by the use of the first person pronoun both in the introductory and concluding portions. In the introductory portion, the members have employed a short method of construction and used words and phrases at different places and thus made it somewhat difficult for the reader to easily arrive at the intended sense. Besides, to avoid the repetition of the Regulation twice, they have successfully employed the artifice of what is known as "the double-faced construction" by locating the Regulation in the middle part of the inscription, and made it the end of the introductory portion and the commencement of the concluding portion. The Assembly of the Uttaramēru–Chaturvēdimaṅgalam who framed the inscription could well have ended it with the Regulation. But perhaps on acccount of the insufficiency of the information in the introductory portion they thought it fit to add the concluding part to show more clearly what part was played by all those that figure in the inscription. From this portion one can easily know also the regular sequence of the various acts involved in the emergence of this inscription.

The following are the acts in regular succession:

The first act is the sending of the letter by the king. As this is the basis of the inscription under consideration it is worth going through it with care and noting its significance. The members of the Assembly have given the most important part of its contents in the king's own words, perhaps to avoid any blame from any quarters. It is the misunderstanding of it that has given room for several conjectures which the text hardly admits.

The king starts his letter with the sentence "In this very manner, from this year onwards, till the moon and the sun (endure), committees shall always be formed by the pot-ticket (system) of selection only".

The abrupt but very pointed commencement of the Royal Communication with *ipparišē* (*i.e.* in this manner only), the demonstrative *i* at the beginning and the separating particle *e* at end in the place where it occurs *i.e.* immediately after the

citation of the various clauses of the Regulation, shows unmistakably that the king enclosed the Regulation with his Letter. That the Regulation must have been enclosed with the Letter is made sure by the short contents of it *viz.* "from this year onwards, committees shall always be formed by the pot-ticket (system) only." Besides, the phrase "in this very manner", where it occurs, cannot refer to any other thing. It is for the purpose of seeing that the Regulation, as sent by the king, was adopted by the Assembly without the slightest change, that the individual Tattanūr Mūvēndavēḷān was specially ordered (*Śrī Āñai*) to remain with the members of the Assembly, at the time of their adopting the Regulation.

The second act is the receipt of the Royal Letter and the showing of it to the members of the Assembly.

The third or the final act is the drawing up of the inscription and promulgating the Regulation as their own.

In the face of all the facts revealed to us in the order of their occurrence by the members of the Assembly themselves it will be a glaring anachronism to say that the Assembly made the Regulation and the king referred to it.

The following has to be particularly noted. The individual mentioned in each of the inscriptions is not stated to have come from or sent by the king. Neither is he stated to have carried any instruction as to what must be the contents of the Regulation. On the other hand, it is distinctly mentioned that the letter of the king was sent, and on its having been received and shown, the *Sabha*, with the individual remaining with the members at the bidding of the king's command, drew up the inscription embodying the Regulation. Under the circumstances, it may be said that no part of the Regulation is attributable to the members of the Assembly of Uttaramallūr who shaped the inscription (not the Regulation), or to the individual who remained with them at the bidding of the king to see that the Regulation was carried out correctly. Such being the case, one will not be well advised to attribute intelligence to one and condemn the other for want of it. The promulgation of the Election Regulation is the result of

showing the king's Letter (*i.e.* the endorsement) and the Regulation which was enclosed with it.

The earlier of the two Uttaramallūr inscriptions has been translated as near as possible to the original and the introductory and concluding portions have been shown to have close bearing, the latter being more explanatory than the former. It only remains now:

(1) to say a word about the date of this inscription and show how far distant the later inscription is from this and to point out the necessity for its replacement, and

(2) what improvements there are in the various sections of the Regulation.

Now to the date of the inscription. After the auspicious opening words '*Svasti Śrī*' the earlier inscription commences with the king's name, 'Madiraikoṇḍa Parākēsarivarman' *i.e.* Parāntaka I (accn. A.D. 907) and gives the year twelve in words[4], while the later one gives the same epithet 'Madiraikoṇḍa' to the king, but furnishes the year 'fourteen' and days 'sixteen' in words[5]. The wording of the year in the second inscription *viz.* '*yāṇḍu padinālāvadu nāḷ padinā̱ru*' calls for consideration, for the right understanding of it, as will become clear from the sequel, will enable one to know the real necessity for the issue of this second and later inscription on the same subject as had been dealt with previously by the Assembly of Uttaramēru-Chaturvēdimangalam and embodied in the first inscription which was issued in the twelfth year of the king's reign *i.e.* on any one of the 360 days after the completion of the eleventh year, though that particular day has not been specified. Usually the date portions are lightly passed over by readers except when they happen to be dated in *Śaka* or other known eras or furnish astronomical details, and greater attention is paid to the more intersting contents. One acquainted with the method of dating adopted in Tamil inscriptions would hesitate to take the phrase '*yāṇḍu padinālāvadu nāḷ padinā̱ru*' to mean 'sixteenth day of the year fourteen'. According

4. *yāṇḍu paniraṇḍu āvadu.*
5. *yāṇḍu padinālāvadu nāḷ padinā̱ru.*

to this interpretation thirteen years of the king's reign and fifteen days of the fourteenth year had elapsed and it was on the next day that the inscription was dated. This rendering is wrong and it will be right only if the wording of the date were '*yāṇḍu padinālāvadil nāḷ padināṟu*'. But if we keep the wording of the date unaltered, the date of the record must be taken to be the sixteenth day after fourteen years of the reign of the king had elapsed. The effect of our rendering is that the other interpretation actually antedates this inscription by one full year. Numerous inscriptions may be cited with similar dating *viz.* specifying certain number of days immediately after giving the number of regnal years with or without the ending *āvadu* or *vadu*. Some of them will, without comment, show the absurdity of understanding the year '*yāṇḍu padinālāvadu nāḷ padināṟu*' as the fourteenth year only the day being evidently one of the days of that year. But before citing the instances let it be noted that if the days given after the regnal year refer to the days of that regnal year, the given days can in no case exceed 360 (or 365) which ordinarily cover a year, and if they exceed, they have certainly no reference to the immediately preceding regnal year.

1. One of the inscriptions of Māṟavarman Sundara-Pāṇḍya gives the 20th year and 374 days (*Ep. Ind.* Vol. XXII, p. 149).

2. Another of Māṟavarman Sundara-Pāṇḍya II is dated in the 8th year and 959 days, both in words (*Ibid.* Vol. XXIV, p. 159 ff.)

3. An inscription of Jaṭāvarman Kulaśēkhara I is dated in the year 13 and days 4360 (in words) (*Ibid.* Vol. XXV, p. 108).

4. The Ambasamudram inscription of Varaguṇa-Mahārāja I gives for the king the year 4 and days 4535 (*A.R.* No. 37 of 1908).

These instances show the absurdity of taking the year 14 and days 16 (*yāṇḍu padinālāvadu nāḷ padināṟu*) to be the fourteenth year. It must be the fifteenth regnal year, or more precisely 16 days after the completion of the 14th year.

While the first inscription does not convey to the reader on what day of the twelfth year of the king's reign the *vyavastha* was made, the second is more precise in letting him know the exact day when it was done. It was the sixteenth day after the completion of the fourteenth year of the reign of Parāntaka I.

One of the facts let known in the two inscriptions is that the committee mentioned in them had to function for full 360 days and retire, and that their places must be taken up by fresh committees chosen by the pot-ticket system. Now this fact enables us to say that on the day of the second inscription a new set of members should have been chosen for the coming year, the previous year's committee members having (just then) finished their term of office which should have run from the sixteenth day after the thirteenth year. The two previous years' committee members should have accordingly been on their duty for the years of 360 days commencing from the 16th day after the 12th year and 16th day after the 11th year of the king's reign. The last mentioned date is correctly expressed in the first inscription as the twelfth year of the king's reign.

From the real import of the years used in the two Uttaramallūr inscriptions, it has been shown that the interval between them is exactly three years. It was on the completion of the third year that the earlier Regulation was replaced by the later one. That the first Regulation was intended to be in force for three full years only could also be gathered from one of the clauses in that Regulation which prevented the voters from electing the members that had been doing the work of the committee during the three years just preceding the year of the promulgation of the Regulation, and their near relations. The guilt of the past committee members is writ large in this section and it must have been such that their crimes were so grave that they made even their near relations ineligible for being elected. But they were perhaps not so bad or heinous that they did not incapacitate them for life.

Probable Origin of the Regulation

The Assembly of the village of Uttaramēru Chaturvēdimaṅgalam had made a number of other regulations. Between

them and this election Regulation the differenee is the interference of the king and his men. As a rule the king and his men (officials) should neither interfere in the working of the rural bodies nor institute cases. नोत्पादयेत्स्वयं कार्यं राजा नाप्यस्य पूरुषः (*Manu*. VIII,43).

But when any complaint was made to the king regarding embezzlement and dissensions among committee members it becomes the subject for enquiry by the king. The following are worth noticing. In the election regulation in the inscription we have an instance in which the king ordered the exclusion of all the members that had been holding office and their near relations. The nature and gravity of the offence as well as the exact punishment, besides making them ineligible for election for three years, that must have been meted out to those who were implicated in the crime, must necessarily have formed the subject of a separate enquiry and proceedings by the king's court or the *Dharmāsana* and it was irrelevant to be treated in the new regulation for election of committee members by the pot-ticket system.

It is necessary to note here the relationship that existed between the king and the various assemblies like the *Sabha*, which were carrying out most of the State functions in rural areas in ancient times, for a knowledge of it will show how the regulation came to be sent by the king with an order to one of his men to sit with the members of the assembly when that Regulation was being promulgated as their own.

The Tirumalapuram inscription[6] makes it abundantly clear that when a complaint is made to the king regarding misappropriation of property held in trust by an assembly he can send for the members of the assembly, conduct an enquiry and if found guilty punish them also. This, it may be pointed out, was in accordance with the laws laid down in the Dharmaśāstras on the subject of *samvit-vyatikrama*.[7] The members who use violence, effect breaches in assembly, and destroy the property of the assembly, should,

6. *S.I.I.* Vol. III, No. 142.

7. साहसी भेदकारी च गणद्रव्यं विनाशयेत् ।
उच्छेद्याः सर्वे एव ते विख्याय एव नृपे भृगुः ॥

after their offence had been reported to the king, be removed (from the committee).[8] The reporting of the offences to the king must precede the removal. This shows that it is the king that takes cognisance of the offences. Among the Smṛti writers, Bṛhaspati and Nārada deal more fully with cases where the interference of the king is considered necessary in the working of rural administrative bodies and state how such instances should be dealt with.

Though most of the inscriptions recording royal grants of tax-free lands and villages to individuals and assemblies stop with the mentioning of items of privileges conferred on the donees (*parihāras*) and the conditions to be observed by them (*vyavasthas*) wherefrom one can easily infer that failure on the part of the donees to observe them would result in the resumption of the grants, there are some inscriptions which expressly recount the particular rights the king retained in his hands and also mention the particular acts which the donees should not commit. For instance the Khoh copper plate of Samkshōbha (A.D. 529) confers on the donees all the privileges which the king enjoyed excluding punishment of thieves and traitors (*chōra–drōha–daṇḍa–varjam*).[9] Needs it be said that the retention of these was to prevent the contingency of the donees turning out at any time a body of bandits and traitors? The Chammak inscription[10] of Pravarasena II of the Vākāṭaka line states that the donees should commit no treason at any time against the king, that they should be enemical towards such persons that commit the murder of a Brahman, that steal other's property, that commit adultery, that perform acts calculated to be against the interests of the State. The donees should also refrain from doing harm to other villages. If they are found to act otherwise or to give their consent or be a party to such perpetrators, the king shall take away the gift and in so resuming he shall not be considered to have stolen the property.

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8. *Yājnavalkya*, II, 187.
9. *S.I.I.* Vol. III, p. 114 f. and 126 f.
10. *Ibid.* p. 236 f.

"śāsana–sthitiś–cheyaṁ Brāhmaṇair–Īśvaraiś–ch–anupālanīyam; tad–yathā rājñām saptāṅge rājye adroha–pravrittānām brāhmaghna chaura–pāradārika–rājāpathykārī–prabhritīnām samgrāmaṁ kurvatām anya–grāmēshv–aparāddhānāṁ āchandrāditya kālīyaḥ । athō'nyathā kurvatāṁ vā rājñaḥ bhūmi–chchhēdam kurvataḥ astēyaṁ iti ॥"[11]

It may be observed that almost all the offences noted in the inscription quoted above find place in the list of disqualifications detailed in the later of the two Uttaramērūr inscriptions under consideration.

From the texts of the Dharmaśāstras and the extracts from inscriptions given above, it will be clear that some offence such as misappropriation or destruction of property of the assembly, disobedience of the orders of the local body (regularly constituted), theft, causing dissensions among the members of the assembly, effecting breaches therein etc. must have been perpetrated by the members of the committees of the Uttaramērūr and the matter, on being reported to the king, he must have held an enquiry and found the members of the committees of the three years preceding the date to be guilty.

In dealing with cases falling under *samvit–vyatikrama*, in which would come all offences by members of rural administrative bodies, the king seems to have strictly adhered to the principle of correcting the erring members of the constitution by imposing fines as the cases deserved, due regard being paid to the nature of the offences, time, place, age, action and extent of property involved; and enforcing the offenders to conform to the rules of the assembly.[12] The extreme penalty allowed by law *viz.* confiscation of property and banishment from the country[13]

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11. Ep.Ind. Vol. XXIII, p. 159f, *Puṇyōttara–janapada adhyāsitāyām satata dharmakriyā varddhamānāyāṁ pūjyān.........vidhivat sampūjya* Ep.Ind. Vol. XX, p. 61f. *Brāhmanōttarān mahattarādi Kūṭumbinah kuśalam anavarṇya anubhodhayanti.* See also Ep.Ind. Vol. XXI, p. 81f. *Brāhmanōttarān samvyavahāri pramukhān grāma kutumbinaḥ kuśalam anuvarṇya.*

12. and 13. *Yājñavalkya*: 368 and 361

was seldom used except in cases of high treason, murder and other heinous crimes.

Since the clause that incriminates without mentioning names, the members of the committees of the three years preceding the first year of the earlier Regulation which was made in the twelfth year of the king's reign, does not debar them for life, the offence committed by them cannot be considered to be so serious as some others which disqualify persons till the end of their lives : and the application of the incriminating clause "*mūvāṭṭin ippuṟam* etc" would, it will be seen, remove the temporary bar put on all the members and their near relations at the completion of three years commencing from the first year of its operation. Evidently this seems to be one of the primary objects of the legislation, and the other being to introduce the pot-ticket system of election meant to prevent underhand dealings such as canvassing and influencing the electors to vote in one's favour. It may be said that the first regulation was intended to be only a temporary measure, introduced with the express object of excluding for a period of three years certain members found guilty of some offence and their near relations from having a hand in the direct management of the chief functions of the Assembly. The second Regulation was thus a necessary corollary to the first and it had been issued just at the end of the third year of operation of the first.

Now we shall say a word about the effect of the clause "*mūvāṭṭin ippuṟam* etc" in the working of the Regulation during the period of three complete years of its existence on the three sets of incriminated committee members, the first set being the members of the committee of the remotest of the three years preceding the year of introduction of the new Regulation, the second set being the committee members of the next year to that, and the third set being those of the last year which ended on the day of the introduction of the said Regulation. In the first year's election, held on the 16th day of the 12th year of the king's reign, all the three sets of committee members and their near relations would have been excluded from being voted. Note that on the

day of election, the first set had been out of office for two years and the second set for one year. In the second year's election, the application of the clause "*mūvāṭṭin ippuṟam* etc" would have released the first set, who had been out of office for three years, and their near relations, and made them fit for election. In the third year's election, the second set of members, who, by that time, had been out of office for three years, would have been released and made eligible for election. By this time the third set would have been out of committee for two years and by the end of one year would have completed three years of absence and made fit for election. That the words "*mūvāṭṭin ippuṟam* etc" had reference only to the three sets of members and their near relations should have been very clearly known to the electorate at the time of the first election and it may safely be presumed that they would not have missed it in the two subsequent annual elections.

It may perhaps be said that the exclusion of the persons that had served on the committee in the three years preceding the election may be to give more chances for other qualified men in the village to occupy the position of committee members. But this cannot account for the exclusion of their near relations. If for the mere purpose of giving better opportunities to fresh competent men to get into the committees, it was devised that the persons that held office together with their near relations,—though the latter were qualified and were free from faults,—should be made ineligible for being elected, we are inclined to think that the very object would not only be defeated but that no right minded person who wished well of his kinsmen, would ever be willing to accept such an office. On the whole, there is absolutely no ground for thinking that the members that served on the committees during the three years preceding the introduction of the new law of pot-ticket election were free from blame. As has been said above, it is the magnitude of their offence that had adversely affected their kinsmen, and on some complaint made to the king, he must have conducted an enquiry and his judgement has taken the shape of the earlier Regulation. At the end

of the third year there was no need for its retention with the clause "*mūvāṭṭin ippuṟam* etc" and has therefore been replaced with one carefully worded.

Having shown that neither the members of the assembly of Uttaramērū-Chaturvēdimaṅgalam nor the individual Tattanūr Mūvēndavēḷān that figures in the earlier inscription had anything to do with the framing of the earlier Regulation we proceed to consider the contents of the Regulation.

It states first that the village of Uttaramēru-Chaturvēdimaṅglam had 30 *Kuṭumbus* and 12 *Chēris.* By the mere numbers one can easily say that the former is a smaller unit than the latter. From other inscriptions of the village, it is known that the 12 *Chrēis* were named after the 12 names of Viṣṇu and the *Kuṭumbus* were simply called the first, second etc. Here it may be noted that at the time to which the inscriptions under notice is assignable there were several assemblies one of which is *Kuṭumbu*, others being *Śrēni*, *Gaṇa*, *Janapada*, *Naigama* etc. *Kuṭumbu* is largely used in inscriptions and is the smallest of all. *Kula* was a synonym of it. It was a homogeneous body composed of men related to each other and is defined as "*Jñāti–sambandhi–bandhūnaṁ–samūhaḥ*' (cognates, agnates and relations). It was an organised body regularly constituted, but it is hardly recognised as such. Kings whenever they made any gifts of land or village, addressed the *Kuṭumbus* along with the *Rāṣṭrakūta Pramukas* to whom they were subordinate, and asked them not to cause any impediment to the donee. *Rāṣṭrakūṭa* is also called *Janapada*, which occurs in Tamil inscriptions as *Nādu* and means a Divisional assembly. A *Chēri* is a locality where existed two or more *Kuṭumbus.*

The inscription tells us that the members of each of the 30 *Kuṭumbus* were to assemble together and write down names of qualified persons on pot-tickets. It is understood that on the day of election a pot would be kept in each of the *Kuṭumbus* to put in the tickets.

As there would be difficulties in understanding the method of pot-ticket system of choosing members for the various committees one of the many ways of representing the *Chēris* and *Kuṭumbus* is shown below :

	Chēri	*Kuṭumbu*			
I	Kēśava-Chēri	1st	2nd	3rd	*Kuṭumbus*
II	Nārāyana-Chēri	4th	5th	6th	do
III	Mādhava-Chēri	7th	8th	9th	do
IV	Gōvinda-Chēri	10th	11th	12th	do
V	Śrī Viṣṇu-Chēri	13th	14th	15th	do
VI	Madhusūdana-Chēri	16th	17th	18th	do
VII	Trivikrama-Chēri	19th	20th		do
VIII	Vāmana-Chēri	21st	22nd		do
IX	Śridhara-Chēri	23rd	24th		do
X	Ṛṣikēśa-Chēri	25th	26th		do
XI	Padmanābha-Chēri	27th	28th		do
XII	Dāmōdara-Chēri	29th	30th		do

The qualification laid down in the earlier inscription are:

(i) He must possess more than a quartar (*Vēli*) of tax-bearing land.

(ii) A house built on his own site.

(iii) He must be below the age of 60 and above 30.

(iv) Must be regarded as proficient in the Vēdas, Śāstras and in transacting business.

(v) Must possess *artha–śaucham* and *ātma–śaucham*.

(vi) Must not have been a member in any of the committees during the three years preceding the year of election.

(vii) Must not also be a near relation of the members of committees that had retired.

The property qualification is relaxed in the case of persons possessing greater education. It records "Even if one possesses only one-eighth (of a *Vēli*) of land but has mastered one Vēda and knows one of the four Bhāshyas so as to expound them, his name can be entered in pot-tickets."

The age limit in the later inscription is between seventy and thirty two instead of sixty and thirty.

Regarding education, the later inscription replaces "Vēdas and Sāstras" by "*Mantra–Brāhmaṇam vallān*." This is not a

change. In almost all cases where *Vēda* is used in the Dharmaśāstras it is equated with *Mantra-Brāhmaṇa* by commentators.[14]

'*Vēdattilum Śāstrattilum kāryattilum nipuṇar–ennappaṭṭ–iruppār*' and '*artha–śauchamum ātma–śauchamum uḍaiyar*' of the first inscription and the parallel passage in the second inscription, which speak of the qualification of the members of a committee remind us of almost similar injunction laid down in *Yājñavalkya* (II. 191).

On the significance of and the importance laid on *artha śaucha* and *ātma–śaucha*, the following may be cited:

Sarvēshām-ēva śauchānāṁ artha–śaucham paraṁ smṛtam
Yōrthē śucrhi sa śuchiḥ na mṛid-vāri-śuchiḥ śuchiḥ

(Manu V. 106)

Kulluka Bhaṭṭa explains *artha–śaucha* thus:

Artha-śaucham anyāyēna para-dhana-haraṇa-parihārēṇa yad-dhanēhā tatparam-prakṛṣṭaṁ Manvādibhiḥ smṛtam.

Ātma-śaucham is obtained by *vidyā* and *tapas*

Vidyā–tapōbhyām bhūtātmā buddhir-jñānēna śuddhyati

(Manu V. 109)

A text of Bṛhaspati also speaks of qualifications of committee members. "Honest persons aquainted with the Vēdas and with Dharma, able, self-controlled, sprung from noble families, and skilled in every business shall be appointed as heads (of associations)". It will be evident from what has been noted above that the two Uttaramallur inscriptions only reproduce in Tamil almost in the words of the Dharmaśāstras the qualifications laid down for membership of committees in the assemblies of Brahmanical villages.

The information furnished in the earlier Regulation regarding the pot-ticket system which it introduces for the first time is very meagre, but we can have it supplemented by the later record. There is not much of a mystery in this system of voting, collecting, drawing tickets and forming the various committees.

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14. See for instance Kullūka Bhaṭṭa under Manu III, *Vv* 2 and 144 and *Mitākṣara* under *Yājñavalkya* pp. 68,325, and 393. (Bombay edition)

The meagreness may be due to the fact that this Regulation was intended only to serve for a limited people. Another reason may be that as the offending members had to be removed immediately from their office, the king and his council might have issued this Regulation and reserved the details for the later permanent one.

Voting : In each of the 30 *Kuṭumbus* a pot (with an opening at the top) would be kept on the election day for the members of the family group to put in a palm leaf ticket with the name of a qualified person written on it.

Collecting: The inscription uses the clause *Chēri-vaḻiyē tiraṭṭi* for the collection. It means that when all the voters have put in their votes (tickets), a party will proceed with an empty pot to collect them. They will go first to the first Chēri *i.e.* Kēśava-Chēri and secure the tickets in the three pots of the first, second and third family groups, bundle them and provide each with a descriptive covering ticket showing to which family group it belonged. The party will then go to the next Chēri *i.e.* Nārāyaṇa Chēri and secure the three more bundles of tickets from the 4th, 5th and 6th family groups. Similarly they will collect from the other Chēris and bring with them 30 bundles of tickets voted by the 30 *Kuṭumbus*.

Drawing Tickets : This is drawing by a *bāla* (boy) who is not capable of distinguishing forms.

Forming Committees : The Annual Committee can be formed by having one member for each of the twelve Chēris. From the table given this is easily done by drawing one ticket from bundles marked 1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th. These are the numbers in the first vertical column of *Kuṭumbus*. Similarly the Garden Committee can be formed by drawing one ticket from each of bundles bearing numbers 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30 and putting down the names on them. The Tank Committee shall be formed by drawing one ticket from each of the rest *i.e.* the *Kuṭumbus* bearing the numbers 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18. Similarly the *Pañchavāra* and Gold Committees can be formed by drawing one ticket from each of the twelve Chēris and taking six of these for each Committee.

DETERMINATION OF SEASONS, RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND TEMPLES IN ANCIENT INDIA

S. L. Malurkar

In India, as in many of the earlier civilisations of the world, religion and civil life have almost inextricably got mixed. Any discussion of these may be dubbed as one sided. The old Hindu temples attract visitors due to their sanctity to the followers, their location, to their architecture and to their historical or archæological importance. Sometimes, one may be tempted to investigate the significance of a structure in a given locality and in the daily life of the community. While on a visit to Chidambaram (south of Madras) in September 1956, I gathered some ideas and have added a few points which have some relevance. A brief survey of man's progress from early times would help to simplify the trend of thought.

Man developed from a nomadic stage to a settled agricultural community over a long stretch of time. At the earlier stages he would have wandered as a member of a group, hunting, fishing and eating from the existing vegetation. Later, having domesticated a few animals to accompany him, he might eat them off in times of need. The quest for more or better food would make him migrate to more congenial places and might induce him to stock food for some time. When it became necessary, every member of the community had to fend for himself and for his group. In course of time a few in the group might take up or get the responsibility to hunt and to fight off enemy groups to a larger extent than others. They would tend to dominate over others naturally. The advisers to determine these changes took upon themselves much responsibility as any failure might be vested on their heads. The observational powers and the judgement of these advisers had to be of a high order. The surrounding land and the sky would all be noted for guidance.

One would notice the moon in its various phases and its motion or changing position among the stars. The early man's

day would begin at sun set and he would mark off intervals of time by the number of full moons or by the sequence of first crescent after the new moon. The interval between two epochs of maximum or minimum phases would be a lunar month. Noticing that the position of the moon changed from day to day among the stars and that the full moon did not recur every month in the same constellation, he would have got a new measure of period. After every twelve lunar months, the full moon would be nearing the same constellation giving him a pure lunar year.

At the stage of settled agricultural life, man had to prepare the ground for cultivation, to plough, to sow, to weed and later to harvest entities determined by weather and its sequence. In the tropics and sub-tropics the weather is seasonal; *i.e.* dependent on the sun's position among the stars, the period being a tropical year. The twelve lunar months are not helpful directly. The life of the community needed a knowledge of the sun's relative movement among the stars. This involved some observation, interpolation and subsequent deduction which are not altogether easy and would require some effort. Those that could solve it or advise about it would have been very useful and highly esteemed members of the society.

In Egypt – a land of early settled civilisation – the cultivator, until recently, depended on the floods of the Nile river overflowing his fields and irrigating them naturally. The rainfall over Egypt is scanty. At the time of the floods, the sky over Egypt is mostly cloudless while heavy precipitation occurs over the more southern tropical and sub-tropical uplands. The peasant might have thought that the natural irrigation of his fields was a divine dispensation. The Egyptian adviser or priest of old days may not have had the exact information that the Nile floods and the rainfall further south in the then completely unexplored regions were related, but he had noticed that they were seasonal or depended on the sun's position. His maintaining his own importance and the country's well-being demanded all his efforts to tell the seasons and the time of the Nile floods.

Observations were then purely visual. The sun's position with respect to the stars was only possible for a short time after sun set just before sun rise when only the brightest stars would simultaneously be visible. In early summer months the brightest star Sirius (α Canis Majoris) can be observed a little after sunset. The interval between sunset and starset of Sirius would decrease with each successive day until the star would just not be seen at all due to sun's rays (heliacal setting). After a few days, at dawn, the same star would just be visible before sun rise and with each successive day, the interval between star rise and sun rise would increase by nearly four minutes. The first day when the star could just be seen emerging from sun's rays was its *heliacal rising day.* The Egyptian priest in those days had observed that the heliacal rising of Sirius was followed after a few days by Nile river floods and that the heliacal rising followed, after a definite time interval, the heliacal setting of the star. He warned his countrymen to be ready for the Nile river floods. He would get an idea of the tropical year and epochs of equinoxes from observations on Sirius over successive years.

Two thousand years ago, the Indians particularly those living near the coast and having trade relations with the then known countries could and did mutually exchange knowledge. The current knowledge learnt from the foreigners was assimilated and was made a part of local Indian culture. The heliacal rising and setting of Sirius was imbibed indirectly as due to the impending onset of the southwest monsoon in Southwest and in Northeast India, skies would as a rule be clouded. The observational aspect had to enter at some stage. From the prevalent customs even now, one has to trace it.

In Kerala (Malabar), Tamilnad, Orissa and higher up along the east coast upto Bengal, the purely solar Indian year has had a long vogue. Over the rest of India, the calendar has been luni-solar; *i.e.* based on twelve lunar months to which an intercalary month is added every few years and from which a month is very occasionally deducted to bring the luni-solar year in line with a tropical year.

In the ghats bordering the plateau of Mysore, fairs are held at intervals of about twelve years (sometime six or even three) in the dry season when the sun could be seen setting or rising through some particular valley or against some peak. The place would otherwise be mostly unpopulated and would be overrun by thick shrub. Having been tidied up, it would serve as a mart for a few days and the worship of a local deity would be given great prominence. There may be similar events elsewhere in the elevated regions of India.

In many old temples, dedicated to Śiva in his various eponyms, the construction is such that the sun's rays fall at a selected spot in the temple at a particular part of the day at a definite part of the year. The days, when rays are directed only in the dry season between the winter solstice and vernal equinox are selected and get associated with some local feast. Some months later when the sun may be in a corresponding position would be usually in the rainy season with little attached significance. Such temples are named as *Jyothirliṅga* temples and there are twelve such chief ones in India. There are temples of Sun at several other places with deities designated as Arkēśvara etc. The chief Sun temple at Koṇarak (Orissa) is famous. Whatever the worship part of the temple be, the observational part had a large share in its design, construction etc. It could be built in the plains also. Many *Jyothirliṅga* temples are actually in the plains and mark an advance from that in the preceding paragraph.

While there is evidence as above of the direct determination of the sun's position, the intermediary step of the full moon's position was also resorted to in south India for getting at a tropical year. The names of the lunar months follow the names of the lunar constellations where, on the average, the full moon of that month occurs. There are twenty seven lunar constellations where the moon could be found successively at intervals of about a day. There are only twelve distinctly named lunar months. Every year, the full moon on a particular lunar month does not fall exactly in the same lunar constellation. The introduction

of intercalary months (*Adhika Māsa*) and very occasional deduction of a month (*Kṣaya Māsa*) prevent the wandering away of the lunar months and the corresponding lunar constellations on the full moon day (this is the reason why the intercalary month is introduced and very occasionally deducted at different parts of the lunar year). If the time of the full moon and the corresponding lunar constellation is observed, the position of the sun gets determined.

The full moon that would be observed must fall in the dry season or in generally dry interval.

A lunar constellation *Ārdra,* which includes the principal star Betelgeuse (α Orionis) is near Sirius. The full moon happens near this constellation in the month of December or early January corresponding to the Indian *Dhanus* (Sagittarius of Varahamira's days), to the Tamil month of *Marghali* and to the luni-solar months of either *Margaśira* or *Puṣya.* Within a day of the epoch of the full moon—a day later if the month is *Margaśira* and a day earlier if the month is *Puṣya*—the month would actually be in the lunar constellation of *Ārdra.* On that day at dawn, a ceremonial function of *Ārdra Darṣana* (viewing of *Ārdra*) is observed at the famous temple of Natarāja (King of Dancers) at Chidambaram, south of Madras, with the concurrent important festival of Tiruvadurai.

Tiru is an honorific term added to many Tamil words. Sirius is known in India as *Vyādha* (hunter). The period of the festival is almost exactly six months away from the ancient Egyptian one of heliacal rising of Sirius, which allows the intermediary step of the observation of the moon's position at a convenient phase instead of the sun directly. The importance attached to the festival shows that it had great significance on the life of the community.

These suggest that Tiruvadurai has been derived from a corruption of *Vyādha* (vadurai) and *Ārdra Darṣana* is analogous to that of ancient Egyptians of the heliacal rising of Sirius. The knowledge from Egypt had been assimilated into local tradition

for fitting into observations possible in south India. From the above observation, the agricultural community at large would get the benefit for its operations and the advisers would be able to get at the seasons and to determine the epoch of vernal equinox. Such observations and deductions would be a matter of great rejoicing. A festival and consequent elaborate ritual followed, just as in the old Middle-East countries. The portrayed sculpture (Natarāja temple is elaborately carved for the most intricate classical dance poses) must be a representation of the joy and the emotional release with a mood of festive offerings.

The celestial observation, the deductions and the feeling that there was a cosmical orderliness must have been known only to a few and kept as a secret (*Chidambara Rahasya*). On a request, the priests show with a light the *rahasya*–an exhibition of bright spots on an otherwise dark background. This may be a pictorial representation of the star studded sky.

The Tiruvadurai festival is observed in many other temples in Madras (Tamilnād). When transportion and communication are difficult and with the possibility of the sky getting obscured over some regions, a scatter of these observing grounds would serve the community better. It might allow intercompeting observations. At some places, only the ritual part of the festival might have been borrowed.

Another important festival based on the luni-solar calendar but observed by the Brāhmins all over India is the full moon in the lunar constellation *Śrāvaṇa* (α, β, γ Lyræ) in August. Over the most of the west coast of India and the western half of the Peninsula, the almost daily rain is followed by longish south west monsoon "breaks" extending to a week or more at this time. The sky gets to be visible frequently and the full moon can be observed. The full moon day in *Śrāvaṇa* is a day of rededication, perhaps, for a good harvest in the community. The day happens before the autumnal equinox of which it is a nearer indicator than the earlier observation in the dry season. In many places, a harvest of paddy (rice) is had before the autumnal equinox.

The intermediary use of lunar observations for determination of seasons shows that the calendar used even in south India in early days must have been preponderantly a lunar one corrected to fit into a tropical year on the average. In an early Tamil work of south India, *e.g. Maṇimekhalai* the reference is mainly to the lunar positions and months. It is a bit difficult to understand the fact that even after they had a knowledge of the determination of the sun's position, the modified lunar calendar continued except on grounds of conservatism. At a stage when useful knowledge was absorbed from any source, the conservatism is also inexplicable. Garga advised that the Ionians (यवन) had good astronomical knowledge which should not be discarded simply on the ground of the people being Mlechhas or foreigners.

The need to know in advance the commencement of seasons or the position of the sun led to the growth of various *Siddhāntas* (astronomical works). With the calculation and the authority which it was likely to assume, the direct observation of the sun would gradually assume less importance and the ritual items would gain. But the construction of newer temples would follow the accepted traditions and *jyotirliṅga* temples might have been built at other places also. The groups of temples which followed after the growth of the *Siddhantas* as in the Post-Purāṇic or Bhāgavata period may not have had much observational side at all. However, the *siddhāntas* that arose in differing periods with several corrections to the earlier ones shows that occasionally at least, some had taken the trouble of making primary observations.

The observations of the sun and of the moon in association with religious functions can be seen in different layers of customs and habits that have grown in India. The phase of the moon, the lunar constellation (*nakṣatra*) are associated with sun rise or afternoon of the day. The observance of any feast, according to different groups, may be on the eve of, during or after the phase or *nakṣatra* at sun rise or afternoon. With exactly the same calendar calculation, different days for the same festival may be

in practice among several groups or tracts of the country giving a confused picture. More confusion is introduced if the solar month or position is superimposed on the lunar phase or *nakṣatra*, forenoon or afternoon etc. The confusion is due to the criteria applied to determine the festive occasion which have all been allowed to exist in the course of centuries. As an example, the *Śrāvaṇi* festival—full moon in the lunar month of *Śrāvaṇa* above—is often in solar *Simha* (Leo) month (Tamil: *Āvaṇi*). In Kerala, the festival "Oṇam" is observed in the solar month *Simha* or Tamil *Āvaṇi* when the moon is in *Śravaṇa Nakṣatra*. The phase of the moon is ignored but the stellar position of the sun and of the moon have taken importance. The importance attached to *Oṇam* can be understood as it is about the harvest time in Kerala.

Even the Tiruvadurai festival has got similar type of distortion. The full moon day of *Mārgaśira* (instead of Tamil solar month of *Marghali* or Indian *Dhanus*) has become an important festival in many places in western India and even in Nepal under the name of *Dattātreya Pūrṇima* or *Datta Jayanti*. Such temples are left alone for major portion of the year and the temples are over some hill tops or even isolated places. The accompaniments of the deity Dattātreya (a hunter) dogs etc. seem significant for a festival connected with *Śirius* (α Canis Majoris) following Orionis. The festival period is usually dry in western India. Whether the epoch was used for observatiou or only as a ritual event would need more study at various sites.

The position of the sun was the chief problem of the old Indian calendar. It is given meticulously with reference to lunar constellations even in luni-solar *Panchangas* (Indian twenty seven Almanacs) and go by the name of rain-*nakṣatra* or *Mahā nakṣatra* showing the exact need for the knowledge. Some years ago, it was customary to tabulate rainfall according to the position of the sun or rain *nakṣatra* in the Agricultural Department of Mysore State.

The ordinary man has also imbibed some of the knowledge. He talks of *Hathi* rain; while the older Bombay civilian spoke of elephant rains indicating the end of the south west monsoon

rains there. He connected it with the large size rain drops that occur instead of the drizzle earlier. At this background lies the fact that the showers belong to a period when the sun is in lunar constellation of *Hasta* (Sanskrit for elephant ; Hindi, *Hathi*) extending over the last or third week of September and a few days of October. This period coincides with the end of the south west monsoon in the Bombay area.

In Mysore, the ordinary people talk of blind *Chitta* rains corresponding to the fortnight after *Hasta* when the sun is in *Chitra* constellation. The continuous rain for two or three days are due to depressions or cyclonic storms in the Bay of Bengal when situated near the latitude of many places in the old Mysore State. There are also statements that seem to summarise the rain type corresponding to the sun's position. If the rains of early summer happened to be in *Rohiṇi* or *Ārdhra* the subsequent distribution of the monsoon was supposed to be unsatisfactory while those of *Punarvasu* and *Puṣya* were helpful. It is not necessary to attach any deductive significance to these statements at this stage. It is enough to show that though a luni-solar calendar was in vogue in Mysore and Bombay, the sun's position and hence the solar interrelation was primary for the agriculaturist.

Many of the large temples are on the east coast of India. Most of the large rivers in the Peninsula of India get fed by rains along and near the west coast of India and flow eastwards to the Bay of Bengal. The floods in these rivers are realted to the seasons and the position of the sun. On some of the more famous river banks, people congregate to bathe ritually according to solar calendar and talk of flood water being expected at the time. It is doubtful if specific relation between sun's position and the flooding of rivers was current at some stage, and particularly when locally the weather was good and the river got a fresh supply of water. Without intimate enquiry at such places, it would not be possible to determine the importance of the occasions from a calendar point of view.

In the villages (where some of the old practices still continue) of Mysore, people gather round the local *jyotiṣa* (*joṣi*) on the

New Year day for *Panchānga Śravaṇa* (listening to the Almanac) to obtain a knowledge of the epochs of the various rain-stars or when the sun enters different lunar constellations in terms of the succeeding luni-solar year. The seasonal epochs of precipitation and perhaps the times of ritual bathing in the rivers would be given. Having got thus far, the *jyotiṣa* would have been asked about the nature of precipitation in the various periods or seasonal events. The astronomer and future reader got mixed up as in many older periods. One group took up the responsibility for computations and the other followed the advice closely. The arrangement continued long in India and must have been mutually beneficial.

Returning once again to the old temples, the observational value of the sun's or of other celestial object being viewed in a given direction at a given epoch of time can hardly be underestimated (the sun's rays falling at a given place is in the same category). Many of the temples of Madras have survived from a long time without much modification of pattern. The alignment of inner and outer walls are to a great degree of accuracy east west or north south as in many ancient places of worship. The outer walls forming a square or rectangle are often of big proportions on a wide flat area (available in the Madras deltaic regions) but still well aligned. There are usually big doorways in these walls with tapering spires above them in the shape of a lengthened trapezoid. At the flat top of the trapezoid, an odd number of equally spaced pointers are found. When one stands on straight line joining the centres of north and south gates, a view to the north or south would allow, in the line of pointers, the determination of the meridian passage of a celestial object at the elevation. The passage of the object across each pointer would resemble that in a telescope eye-piece across the cross wires. The inside distances of the temple being large, the small pointers could be taken as spaced at equal angle intervals from the observationol point. This would provide greater accuracy for determining the mean time of passage across the meridian. Varying the position of the observer, different

altitudes could be had. Even for objects near the zenith, the height of the gateway being big, the observations would have been possible. The pointers in the east and west gateways would have been useful to get the elevation above the horizon of an object, apart from any symmetry of construction.

A well known method of marking off angles by viewing it against a spire from varying distances has also been used. These distances could be marked off by steps or by walls and one would view standing against a wall. Corresponding to these stages, an enclosing wall except for a gate on the side might be built round the centre or place of worship, It may be due to architectural symmetry or for observational convenience, the gates in successive walls might be on opposite sides giving a labyrinthine appearance. The seven such enclosing walls have been famous at Srirangam. Ranganatha Temple (near Tiruchirapalli) and exists in several other places over a smaller number of enclosing walls. The linear spacing of the walls become successively smaller and would not be a matter of accident. In ancient world, separation of equal angular intervals had attained some importance. It can be seen in Parthenon in Greece. The trigonometrical calculations and tables on old India could find value only if angular measurements were made. It helped them to study the movement of objects of the solar system.

The number of well preserved old temples in Madras is large. Many of them still continue to function. It would be worth recording facts, collecting *sthaḷapurāṇa* (local history) about the different structures in the temple like the spires, doorways and ponds which may have some tradition. They may reveal some observational aspect of the heavens. The permanence of the sites, which would have been difficult without some sanctity being attached to them, would have allowed any long period corrections to be applied. It appears hard to imagine that all these ancilearies which could materially help astronomical observations in days before telescope were invited had no mundane purpose. The fact that in India celestial observations

were practically confined to the solar and lunar ecliptic regions shows that the approach was strictly utilitarian—for a calendar. A mind tuned to the concept of cause and effect would take full advantage of the temple construction and sanctity in cognate fields, for observations over long periods. Or the temples were constructed at places where observation would be useful to the specialist and where general public were likely to gather. The specialists would have pursued their observations without disturbing but aiding the lay life. It would be an observation conscious group that would have built the famous Brihadēśvara temple at Tanjore. At the same time, the study near the east coast would allow one to know the sources of impact of outside influences. A similar study in the coastal regions of Andhra and Orissa would be quite fruitful. In Mysore, old temples exist (there is a tradition that Chandra Gupta Maurya settled in Śravaṇabelgoḷa near Hassan). Due to rocky terrain, the temples are much smaller in extent. However, the local history might be interesting.

Such a study might help to reconstruct the various phases of the development of one of the important branches of knowledge of India : astronomy and the Calendar. There are ample references to correct, and to determine the movement of the planets etc. by noting the times of conjunction, opposition of major planets, of the maximum elongation, rising and setting in the east or in the west of the minor planets and of eclipses. The object of this note has been to show that the Indians had a possibility of getting at observations of the solar system over the year, and that speculations would have had a sound observational background though they may not always have documented them as we at present would have liked. The documentation of astronomical observations in China helped to verify many events. The position of ancient India between Middle East and China (Far East) must have allowed exchange of knowledge.

*PRATIBHĀ**

(Some Analogies in Ancient Western Thought)

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I

The roots of the antithesis between East and West go deep down into antiquity. The wars between the Greeks and the Persians with which European history starts were its first overt manifestation. But behind this, and forming its dim background, stands an earlier cleavage between the East and the West when the frontiers which divided them were still fluid, when first the Iranian branch of the Āryan family broke away (ideologically) from the Indian. It was a spiritual schism which is symbolic of much in later history. The Indian outlook, as represented in the Vedas and Upaniṣads was predominantly naturalistic and monistic. The Avestan Reformation with its dualistic metaphysics and ethical zeal, stressed the irreconcilability of the principles of good and evil ; and characteristically turned Indra the chief god of the Vedic pantheon into Angra Mainyu, the very embodiment of the principle of evil. Here we see the beginnings of an opposition which is essentially temperamental in its nature and origin.

For the monist, experience is a continuum in which the supreme principle is immanent. His goal is the realization of identity (*Abheda*) in the midst of diversity (*Bheda*), necessarily involving merger of individuality in an impersonal ultimate, whether it is called *Brahman* or *Nirvāṇa*. The means of reaching the goal is the subordination of Reason which is the cause of all difference, to Intuition which alone can grasp the whole.

On the other hand, for the dualist, as the very term implies, there is a basic dichotomy in experience, not only ethically but also metaphysically. The spiritual and the material worlds are incompatibles: one of them has to be foregone if the other is to be won. Godhead must be transcendent, and cannot be thought of except anthropomorphically: the dogma that God created man in His own

* Continued from Vol. LIII Page 22.

image, being according to the sceptic, merely the inversion of the fact that man pictured God as a sort of glorified Man. Man's soul also is a distinct entity, and between God and man there can only be an eternal I–Thou relationship. No religion is worth the name unless it assures personal survival. Intuition is not denied but reason is given priority.

These "polarized" tendencies were, of course, never fully realized in any historical group. The varieties of their emphasis and their interpenetration would account for most of the complexities on the intellectual life in the East and the West, as also for the antinomies of reason and intuition, intellect and emotion, science and mysticism and so on. Thus in India we have had the monists, be it of the Buddhist variety positing the *Śūnya* (Void), or Sankara's *Brahman*; and on the other hand the dualists of various types, mostly theists of the *Bhakti* schools. It is not without significance that foreign observers have often sought to make out that these latter were born of Western (Christian) influence.

The split between the Indians and the Iranians was a family affair as between members who shared a common culture and spoke almost identical languages. But when Cyrus took Babylon in 538 B. C. the Persians came into contact with an alien race, the Semites, among whom were the Jews of the "Captivity". Cyrus and his successor Darius permitted the Jews to go back to their home-land, but many preferred to stay on in Babylon. For the batch of emigrants who returned to Jerusalem, their leader Ezra had the Mosaic Law compiled afresh, incorporating much Babylonian material including the legends of the Flood and the Ark.

There occurred mutual assimilation between the Persians and the remaining Jews in religious beliefs and practices. The extent of the Semitic influence as a whole can be gauged from the fact that Darius made Aramaic the official language of the empire about this time. On the other side, as Emile Burnouf first pointed out, the Jews owe to the Persians those

conceptions regarding the immortality of the soul and its transmigration, which appear in the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, and the Septuagint, but cannot be traced in the Pentateuch. In a way, the Jews were the heirs of Persian spirituality by reversion. It has been suggested that the name of the important sect of Pharisees was derived from Persian (Fārasi). The older section which plumed itself on its strictness in observing the Mosaic Law came to be known as the Sadducees.

There is a familiar notion that the ancient Jews were an exceptional race with a pure monotheistic religion and charged with a unique spiritual mission. This is a misunderstanding which has to be cleared if we are to gauge aright their role as one of the two major factors in shaping European civilization. The Jews were an exclusive and proud nation, claiming to be the "Chosen People" of Yahveh, their, "jealous" and "vengeful" tribal god, with whom their forbears had entered into a covenant assuring him, in return for his protection, of the first fruits of the soil and of the sacrifice of their first born children. The contract with Yahveh related wholly to the goods of this world; the Jewish religion had no "other worldly" affinities, and was narrow and formal in its outlook. As a whole, the Jews seem to have been intolerant by nature, and innately cruel, characteristics which are responsible for the hostility they have evoked through the ages. From the earliest times their history has been one of continuous tribulations, which however only served to intensify their self-consciousness and knit them closer together.

Such was the milieu in which from time to time "Prophets" appeared, like voices of their better conscience, denouncing their ways. Thus Isaiah expresses his horror at "the slaying of the children in the valleys," and Jeremiah condemns his countrymen "because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents." The prophets tried to turn them from their evil ways, and to teach them that purity

of the heart was more essential than formal observance of the letter of the Law. The priests, opposed them in the name of the vested interests and often made short work of the prophets. Jeremiah for example had to flee to Egypt where it is said he was stoned to death by his own compatriots. Jesus, the last of the prophets, and the greatest, had to die on the cross at the instance of the priests. Perhaps the Jews were the most confirmed conservatives and reactionaries of their time.

After the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D. and the "Dispersal" of the Jews, large numbers settled in Alexandria and adopted the Greek language. The remarkable intellectual life of that great centre of Hellenistic learning left a great impress on Jewish thought, and on the other-hand Jewish thinkers of genius like Philo contributed substantially to the development of Alexandrian philosophy. All these circumstances taken together account for the peculiarly composite nature of Jewish thought. The Jewish scriptures have been described as "a literary wilderness," and as "a tangle of Jewish, Persian, Greek and Gnostic thought."

With this background, it may be conceded that the Jews were an unusually gifted people who, in the words of Whitehead, "for two and a half thousand years have continually provided suggestion, novelty and achievement, whereby Europe never lost the subconsious ideal of progress." [58]

II

Of the two major factors referred to, the second was Greece. Modern historians are inclined to give greater prominence to this than to the Hebraic element. They would trace the beginnings of science as well as philosophy to Greece, in fact of the modern mentality itself. The literary and artistic achievements of the Greeks also make them an ancestry worth claiming. On the other hand, the contemporary mind is out of tune, speaking generally, with the Jewish as well as the Christian way of life and thought, and is rather shamefaced on this score, although not

58. *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, p. 53.

denying its historic importance. An examination of the interplay of these two influences is essential for understanding a situation in which an opposition was set up early between the functions of reason and intuition, developing into a progressive devaluation of the latter.

The Greek mentality offers in many ways a marked contrast to the Hebraic. This antithesis would suggest that it was nearer to the old Indo Āryan culture; and as a matter of fact, that is so. The Greek language is nearest to Sanskrit among the Western languages ; and as is now recognized, language and thought are closely linked together. Even racially, the Greeks came from the same Āryan stock.

In any case, the view of older historians that it was the "mission of Greece to save Europe from some dread abstraction called Orientalism" can no longer be maintained, in the face of the realization of the continuity of Greek civilization not only with the older civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, but with those of India and Iran. After the "discovery" of Sanskrit by Europe about the close of the eighteenth century, generations of scholars from Sir William Jones onwards have been impressed by the close affinities between Greek and Indian thought. Max Muller's writings have done much to elucidate this topic. Without going into the vexed question of relative indebtedness, we may note that Greek tradition itself speaks of most of their outstanding thinkers travelled and studied in the East, and sometimes India is specifically mentioned ; not only Pythagoras and Heraclitus, but Herodotus, Democritus and Plato as well.

The notion that the Greeks were a secular and rationalistically minded people is a misapprehension. On the other hand, religion seems to have dominated their lives, if the word is understood in accord with Eastern ideas rather than in the exclusive sense which has become associated with it in European history, following the Hebraic-Christian tradition. The Greek vision of the universe was single, and in it the human and the divine were inextricably blended. This would apply equally to popular beliefs as well as to the two philosophic schools into which Greek

thought is commonly divided: the Ionian or eastern, and the Italian or western (derived from Pythagoras who had settled in Crotona, a Greek city on the south-east coast of Italy).

In this connection, it is of interest to note that the old hypothesis that the original Āryan home was somewhere in Central Asia and that from there they migrated, some to Asia and the others towards Europe, seems to be giving way before another positing that it was in Europe itself.[59] Although this is all in the region of conjecture, still it is bound to have its repercussions on the orientation of problems of East and West.

Nowadays, text-book orthodoxy traces the beginnings of modern science to Ionia, where materialistic thought is said to have arisen as a wholly novel factor in a milieu unhampered by past traditions.[60] But the close correspondence between important features in the Ionian speculations and Indian thought in general as well as archaeological discoveries which have revealed the existence of ancient Āryan settlements in Asia Minor, suggest the exact reverse. However that may be, there can be no doubt that in their approach to nature, the objective of the old Ionian thinkers as well as their method was remote from those of modern science. They were not concerned with the observable at all, but like the Upaniṣadic thinkers of India, looked within for an explanation of nature. This would apply to the whole range of Greek thought, not excluding the Platonic which is often represented as a reaction against the Ionian school. It holds with even greater force in regard to the Alexandrian (Hellenistic) schools, in which Greek thought became fully mature. In contradiction to the commonly held view that the Hellenistic culture is a falling off from the pure Hellenic heights, a derivative and decadent phase, in our view it is really the final culmination of an unbroken tradition eight centuries in span.

To go back to the Ionians, nature (Physis) meant to them something altogether different from "matter" as we understand it: this word had not yet been invented. Physis stood for the

59. T. Burrow: *The Sanskrit Language.* page 9 (1955).
60. Burnet: *Early Greek Philosophy.*

very image of the life, force and psychic energy, having much in common with the Indian concept of *Prāṇa*. The stuff of which this universe was compounded was "living stuff" : such was the element "Water" to which Thales ascribed the origin of the cosmos. Anaximander's conception of this stuff as the divine "Apeiron" reminds us of the Indian *Prakṛti* which comprises mind as well as matter. Perhaps spirit (*Puruṣa*) was also included within the ambit of the Greek term. Anaximander spoke of the evolving worlds as Theoi or gods, an idea which recurs in Plato's *Timaeus*. The Greeks were concerned with primordial principles or "Arche".

Heraclitus attributed primacy to "Fire", but this was "plastic" fire, self-kindled and self-extinguished, at once burning (Pur) and soul (Psyche). His picture of the world as change and becoming is reminiscent of the Indian idea of "*Jagat*" (the moving world), while his primeval Fire brings to mind the Upaniṣadic idea of "*Lokādim agnim jagataḥ pratiṣṭhām.*"

In opposition to him, Parmenides postulated eternal Being, continuous, indivisible, indestructible and imperceptible to the human senses. He held that the phenomena of nature are unreal. The controversy between Heraclitus and Parmenides is still a live issue in philosophy.

Coming to Democritus and his much vaunted "Atomic theory", we note that his atoms included "soul atoms" also (*Cid–aṇu?*); and his general outlook too suggests that he was an idealist by temperament and that the usual description of him and other Ionian philosophers as materialists is on the whole a misnomer. It is curious that about the same time, Kaṇāda put forth an atomic theory in India. Democritus had perhaps stronger affinities with him than with the modern scientists. So much for Ionian science.

In religion, the Ionian thinkers did not reject the Olympian gods of popular mythology any more than the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā disowned the gods of the Hindu pantheon. In Greece as in India, there seems to have

been a recognition of hierarchical grades in knowledge, each valid at its own level. The aim of Ionian philosophic endeavour seems to have been to reach beyond or behind anthropomorphic mythology to the principles (*tattvas*) implicit in it. As H. M. Cornford put it, "The modes of thought that attain to clear definition and explicit statement in philosophy were already implicit in the unreasoned intuitions of mythology".[61] He believes that the conclusions of the ancient Greek thinkers were not mere "theory" as we understand it, but were based on "Theoria" (contemplation of the divine). Arising from some genuine psychological experience they were announced with all the authority of an intuition of the real. He is at great pains to point out that "the ancients were not moderns in the stage of infancy or adolescence" as is often sought to be made out, "but fully mature and wise adults, whose postulates in dealing with experience were, however, different from our own."

III

From the Pythagorean angle also, the situation looks almost identical but with a dualistic emphasis. Pythagoras himself is a semi-legendary figure. Some of the superhuman powers (*Siddhis*) ascribed to him are recorded by Aristotle. He founded a mystic brotherhood which lasted for about two hundred years and left a tradition which was still living in the early Christian centuries. They attached great importance to discipline (*Sādhanā*). Their doctrines whether religious, mathematical or philosophical were only aspects of a unitary vision of the universe, to which Pythagoras first gave the name Cosmos, meaning simultaneously Order and Beauty, which were to be absorbed by the soul in contemplation (Theoria).

The patron god of the Pythagoreans was Apollo, who was recognized as the symbol of "*Light*", not only physical but also mental. Through Orpheus, the semi-divine musician and protege of Apollo, Pythagoreanism was linked with the Orphic mysteries. Machiero says that Orphism was "a primordial

61. H. M. Cornford: The *Unwritten Philosophy* etc.

mystical activity of the human spirit, originating through an immanent activity of our thought. It accompanied the Greek people along all the stages of their evolution." Miss Jane Harrison speaks of it as "a faith so high that it may be questioned whether any faith, ancient or modern, has ever outpassed it."

For the ancients, a mystery was equivalent to a sacrament; it did not signify something inexplicable, but an experience revealed, truly though inadequately, in a lower medium. The aim of the Orphic mysteries was to participate in the "bios Orphicos." These mysteries seem to have been a spiritualizing and purification of the old cult connected with Dionysus, one of the most suggestive gods in the Greek pantheon. To start with, he appears to have been only the wine-god, but he came to be the emblem of life and growth throughout the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and then the spirit of enthusiasm, and the divine impulse of genius and ecstasy. With him was associated Demeter, the corn-goddess. The functions of Dionysus are closely analogous to those of *Soma* in the Vedic and also later Hindu mythology, where *Soma* figures as the essence which nourishes the plants.[62] The "orgies" connected with the Dionysian mysteries have also a strong resemblance with the Indian *Tāntrika Sādhanā* of later times.

There seems to have been nothing very mysterious about these mysteries. They were widely popular ritual traditions, using initiation and regular progress through stages until the sacred symbols were seen, often accompanied by ecstatic visions. It is believed that at one time almost the whole free population of Athens had been initiated. The great poets and philosophers were among them. Pindar says, "Blessed is he who has beheld the mysteries, descending into the underworld; he knows the aim, he knows the origin of life." Sophocles speaks of the elevating tendencies of the mysteries. Aeschylus too was an initiate of the mysteries and it is to this fact that Aristophanes attributes the

62. *Puṣnāmi coṣadhīs sarvās somobhūtvā rasātmakaḥ.*

(*Bhagavad Gīta*: Ch. V.)

inspiration of his tragedies. Not only did Plato hold that "the ultimate design of the mysteries," in the words of Thomas Taylor, "was to lead us back to the principles from which we are descended, that is to a perfect enjoyment of intellectual good", but he did not hesitate to regard the illumination which came to the initiate in philosophy as of the nature of that acquired in the mysteries.

The aim of the mysteries seems to have been the intuitive realization of the mystic unity of all the gods in a single First Principle, often named as Zeus. The Orphic hymns forcibly remind us of the utterances of the Veda. One of them says, "He is the One self-proceeding, and from him all things proceed, and in them he exerts his activity: no mortal beholds him, but he beholds all." In passing, it may be observed that the mysteries go back into pre-Grecian antiquity, for Herodotus identifies Dionysus with the Egyptian Osiris. Also, in later times he developed into the suffering god, the saviour of humanity, thus leading on to the Christian mysteries and rites of later times.

From the "mysteries", we pass on naturally to mythology and poetry with which Greek religion was bound up intimately. The epic mythology, for all its anthropomorphism and inconsistencies, swayed the mind not merely of the ignorant populace but of the great poets and dramatists also. After all, mythology is the true history of the mind of a people, to explain away or ignore which would be to falsify or obscure it. As Cornford has said, there is a factor of permanent value in myths which transmits the symbolic expression of the universal problems of life and their solutions. This element was shared by Sophocles with his remote ancestors, and we today share it with Sophocles. The old poets were called "Theologoi".

Homer and Hesiod, who were the vehicles of the ancient myths, had become the scripture of the Greeks. The myths and rituals connected with them were reverently regarded by Aeschylus and Sophocles, and Aristophanes too. The newer poets were the teachers of Greece. In saying that poetry is

"truer" than history, Aristotle is only echoing the intelligent opinion of his day. Tragedy which was the most characteristic form of Greek literature arose directly out of the great Dionysian festivals. Right up to Plato's time, the liaison between religion and poetry remained very close, but poetry actually tended to become not more secular but less.[63] The Greek took his gods seriously, although perhaps not in the literal Hebrew sense. That he could even afford to laugh at them, with Aristophanes for example, did not detract from their sense of reality. On the contrary, we have the authority of Gilbert Murray for saying this.

The matter-of-fact Greek attitude towards their gods is best illustrated by the stray testimony of the inscription on a pillar erected by Xenophon (of the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand" fame) by the side of a temple built by him in honour of Artemis. It runs: "This property is dedicated to Artemis. He who has it and enjoys its produce, must give a tithe every year, and from the surplus keep the temple in repair. If he does not do this, the goddess will see to it." It was the fact that Plato's contemporaries took their mythology realistically and that the poets were the perpetuators of this tradition, which made him launch his attack on the poets, whom he would banish from his ideal Republic, one and all, even Homer and Hesiod. The reason why in a later age, the Christian Fathers fought down all pagan literature, especially poetry which they called "Vinum Diabolum" (the Devil's wine), is identical; they held in their very texture, not to be separated, the old religion.

(*To be continued*)

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63. R. A. Scott-James: *The Making of Literature*. p. 31.